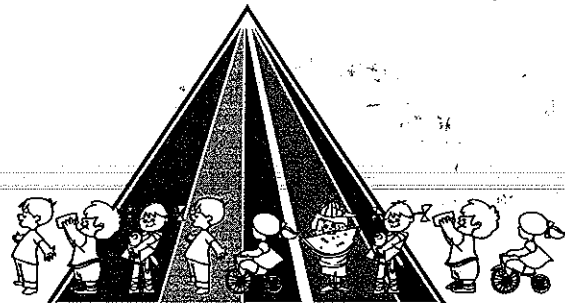


Mealtime Memo

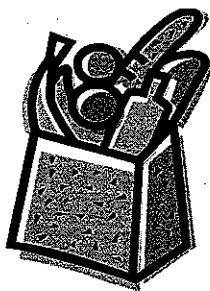
FOR CHILD CARE



No. 2, 2008

Creative Menu Planning

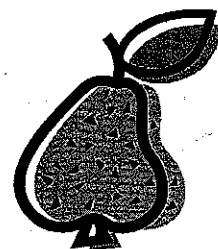
Creative menu planning that involves children in food activities can give children positive experiences with healthy foods. Here are some tips for involving children in meal preparation, fun food activities, and stories about food.



Creative Ideas for Connecting Menus to Classroom Activities

Go beyond basic menu planning; use creative ideas to teach children about food and nutrition. Try the following ideas to connect menus to classroom activities.

1. Connect a menu item to a nutrition lesson.
2. Plan a food activity that allows children to participate in making a snack or meal component. See suggested ideas in the featured menus this month.
3. Use creative names for menu items. For example, when serving apples with peanut butter and raisins, the menu item can be called "apple smiles." Ask children to create inventive names for menu items.
4. Talk about new foods presented in meals. When introducing new foods to children, ask children to tell what food group the food belongs to and how the food grows.
5. Discuss food groups represented in meals.
6. Teach students about nutrition using songs and games.
7. Read a children's book that relates to a menu item to create interest in foods.
8. Use resources such as *More Than Mudpies* for new ideas (NFSMI, 2004).



Menu Planning Tips

Menu planning is one of the most important jobs of food preparation. Careful planning ensures that meals are healthy, tasty, and eye appealing.

1. Offer a variety of foods. Plan to serve a variety of foods throughout the day and week. Be sure that the same foods are not offered too often.
2. Increase fiber and nutrients by including fresh vegetables, fruits, and whole-grain products. Include foods that provide vitamin A, vitamin C, and iron.
3. Limit fried foods, high fat foods, sweets, and high sodium foods.
4. Include a variety of shapes, colors, textures, and tastes.
5. Include some foods in each meal that children easily accept.
6. Introduce new foods to children alongside familiar, well-liked foods.



Mealtime Memo FOR CHILD CARE



Breakfast Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
French toast Peach slices Milk	Peach Muffin Squares- A-16A ¹ Grapefruit sections Milk	Cream of wheat cereal Fresh strawberries Milk	Cheerios® cereal Banana slices ² Milk	Scrambled eggs Whole grain English muffin Tomato juice Milk



Lunch Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Barbecued Beef or Pork on a Roll- F-08 ¹ Carrots and peas Plums Milk	Tuna salad Whole grain crackers Lightly steamed carrot sticks Pineapple tidbits Milk	Baked fish Black eyed peas Green salad with shredded carrots ³ Cornbread Milk	Chicken Nuggets D-09B ¹ Corn Whole wheat roll Diced pears Milk	Beef Burrito- D-21 ^{1,4} New potatoes Orange wedges Milk



Snack Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Watermelon chunks Whole grain crackers Water	Pineapple Scones- A-01 ¹ Milk Water	String cheese Graham crackers Water	Lowfat yogurt Apricot halves Water	Peanut butter ⁵ Apple slices ⁶ Water

¹USDA Recipes for Child Care. Available online at www.nfsmi.org.

²Children can use plastic knives to cut half a banana into slices. Talk about bananas growing on trees and ask children to tell the food groups that are represented in their breakfast (fruit, grains, milk)..

³Children can participate in making salads by tearing lettuce. Read a book about vegetables growing on this day, such as *Oliver's Vegetables* by Vivian French.

⁴As an optional food activity, prepare the filling for the burrito and let it cool. Allow children to place filling in tortillas and roll them before placing them in a baking dish. Talk about the meal components in this dish (meat, grains/bread, vegetable).

⁵Sunflower butter can be substituted for peanut butter.

⁶Have children spread peanut butter on apple slices with a plastic knife. Children can also place raisins (optional) on the peanut butter. Remember that raisins can be a choking hazard for young children.

Sources:

National Food Service Management Institute. (1997). *CARE Connection*. University, MS: Author.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Nutrition Service, & National Food Service Management Institute. (2005). *USDA Recipes for Child Care*. Retrieved December 28, 2007, from <http://www.nfsmi.org>

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